

OTA Urges Waste Reduction as Dump Sites Close

There are 544 land-based hazardous waste sites in the United States, a sharp decline from the 1538 that were operating a year ago. With dumps closing, local opposition to the siting of new facilities, and nagging insurance and liability questions, the country faces a waste disposal crisis within a decade. To avoid being poisoned in a sea of toxic trash, the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) says industry and government must adopt an aggressive strategy for reducing the volume of hazardous waste that is generated.

The problem is detailed by OTA in a new report, *Serious Reduction of Hazardous Waste*, which the congressional office is touting in hopes that legislators will take up the matter next year. The central issue is how to shape an effective federal policy. OTA concludes that traditional regulatory enforcement approaches are probably ineffective because differences in process technology make regulating waste reduction on a plant-by-plant basis impossible. Representative Mike Synar (D-OK), chairman of the House Government Operations subcommittee on energy and environment, says that in the near term the government ought to focus on gathering better data on the volume and types of hazardous wastes being generated and should fund generic research in the area.

How to spur industry and government to rapidly expand their approach to waste management is a formidable problem. While the OTA report shows that waste reduction is "economically feasible," Synar says tax incentives or other government programs may be necessary to assure broad industrial participation. OTA in its report went so far as to suggest that companies be required to report on their waste reduction efforts in annual financial disclosures filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act amendments of 1984, Congress declared a national policy of calling for meaningful reductions in, and, where possible, the elimination of hazardous wastes. However, there is little evidence that industry has embraced this charge, according to OTA. "This country does not come close to using the technology at its disposal for waste reduction," says Joel S. Hirschhorn, who directed the OTA study.

The Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response has responsibility for overseeing waste reduction efforts. To date, its research

activities have focused on the reuse and recovery of materials. But despite the size of the challenge, the research effort is tiny, funded at just \$250,000 in fiscal year 1986.

A June review by a subcommittee of the agency's Science Advisory Board has concluded that the research program as currently structured is inadequate. More emphasis should be put on reducing wastes produced as a part of manufacturing processes, even if that effort comes at the expense of other research programs, concludes the subcommittee. The internal review also calls for EPA to establish a network between experts in industry, academe, and government for the purpose of exchanging data on strategies, problems, and research programs. ■

MARK CRAWFORD

Case of Refusenik Geneticist Tied to Daniloff

The case of the Soviet-detained reporter Nicholas Daniloff has cast new light on the plight of Soviet geneticist David Goldfarb, who has been trying to get permission to emigrate for the past 7 years.

In April 1984, shortly after being promised an exit visa, the KGB entered Goldfarb's apartment, confiscated his collection of cell lines, and accused him of trying to take security material out of the country. Scientists around the world responded by putting a moratorium on the exchange of cell cultures with the Soviet Union, and ultimately the charges were withdrawn. No action has been taken on the visa.

Goldfarb's son Alex, who teaches at Columbia University, has now revealed that the KGB action was taken immediately after Goldfarb refused to participate in setting up Daniloff, a personal friend. The KGB called in Goldfarb shortly before the break-in and asked him to invite the reporter over for a farewell visit to his apartment, where they would be waiting to arrest him. Goldfarb later told Daniloff of the scheme, and the two continued to see each other.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry has denied this version of events. Meanwhile, Goldfarb, a diabetic with one leg, was hospitalized 2 months ago. Alex Goldfarb says his father is in perilous condition, that one of his toes has been amputated, and that gangrene has set in, raising the possibility of another amputation. Two American doctors, Kenneth M. Prager of Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and Glenn W. Geelhoed of George Washington University, have applied for visas to go see Goldfarb but have been

turned down. No members of the foreign press have been allowed to visit him.

Calling the situation "ominous," Alex Goldfarb says he believes that the Soviets want to silence Goldfarb by keeping him hospitalized indefinitely, and that the only way to prevent this is for scientists to send cables expressing concern to the Soviet Embassy and the Soviet Academy of Sciences. ■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Fight Looms Over Reelection of Unesco Chief

Paris

Western nations are trying to block any efforts by Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, the current director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, to seek a third 6-year term of office when his current term expires at the end of next year.



Amadou Mahtar M'Bow. Proposal would limit his tenure to two terms.

The Australian ambassador to Unesco, former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, proposed to the agency's executive committee in Paris in early September that it should support moves to limit the appointment of heads of all U.N. agencies to two terms.

Although the proposal was shelved before it could be discussed, members of the Australian delegation claim that it was not specifically aimed at M'Bow. However, they admit that, if such a ruling were eventually adopted at next year's General Council, M'Bow would be directly affected. And they point out that such a suggestion has already been approved in principle by the major Western contributors to the budget of